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Nixon Should Probe Watergate

Post 11/18/72

MANY AMERICANS will certainly welcome President Nixon's second-term pledge to put an end to the "whole era of permissiveness" and loose conduct, but this should be bad news for all those involved in the Watergate crime and the related scandals centering on secret Nixon campaign funds.

Since the Watergate case, in the large, is easily the year's most notorious example of political "permissiveness," it is only logical to assume that it will be No. 1

in the Nixon crusade to restore public morality.

Not that there aren't other inviting opportunities for the President's new broom, but cleanups, like charity, should begin at home. Being an astute politician, Mr. Nixon knows, of course, that nothing would impress the people more than to start off with an administration housecleaning.

THE PRESIDENT, to be sure, has not yet spelled out precisely what he means when he repeatedly but somewhat vaguely invokes that favorite word of his—permissiveness. But he has given us a clue or two.

He refers, for instance, to "the enormous movement toward permissiveness which led to the escalation in crime," and other delinquencies. He thinks "all of this came as a result of those of us who basically have a responsibility of leadership not recognizing that above everything else you must not weaken a people's character."

The President has put his finger on it. How can people be expected to react indig-

nantly against corruption if their leaders don't?

ONE OF THE FASTEST ways Mr. Nixon could strengthen the "people's character" would be to order a full-scale, on-the-level investigation and prosecution of the whole Watergate scandal.

There would, frankly, be some risks to the administration in laying bare all of the burglarly, bugging, espionage and covert collection of slush money that went on. Mr. Nixon might even have to fire some of his close associates. But think how it would improve everybody's character, and that, as the President says, is what the country needs.

All of our characters might be further strengthened if Mr. Nixon also turned his attention to the kind of permissiveness that the Pentagon practices: the juicy, inflated contracts for favored friends, the use of hundreds of millions of tax dollars to give special interests like Lockheed Aircraft and the fortunes in misused dollars we have allowed the grafting Saigon generals to pocket.

NEXT TO permissiveness, Mr. Nixon says, his second term will be dedicated to promoting what he calls

the "work ethic." This, too, is reassuring, for it seems to indicate that the President now thinks everybody ought to be employed.

While this is a sharp reversal of policy, it is welcome all the same. It is true that during Mr. Nixon's first term the nation's welfare rolls rose from 8 million to more than 14 million, and if Congress had passed his minimum-income plan, still another 12 million would have been added. Also, other millions started drawing unemployment compensation as the jobless rate almost doubled between 1968 and 1972.

For the last year, Sen. George McGovern had been campaigning for guaranteed full employment on the grounds that, on balance, it is better to pay people to work than not to work. That may be a radical notion, but it is comforting to find Mr. Nixon apparently embracing it.

WHILE IT IS uplifting for the President to lecture the nation on the virtue of work, it would be even more inspirational if he made sure that there are jobs for those who are eager to work but can't find employment. The "work ethic" is great, except it's not edible.

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